

Deb at Eastern Gateway Community College Project HOPE

Deb is a cheerful, laid-back student at the Hannah E. Mullins School of Practical Nursing who will graduate in February 2013. Her story began about 10 years ago, when she and her husband of 25 years divorced. She struggled with the fact that she had been deceived for so many years, and her children struggled as well. Deb spent the next several years trying to comfort her children as their father wanted nothing to do with them after the divorce. She found herself trying to get by with limited spousal support, and her home went into foreclosure.

After enduring so much heartbreak and spending so much time caring for others, she decided to do something for herself now that her children were grown. She enrolled in nursing school. It has been a tough road for her; since her spousal support ended in August, 2012, she has been living on student loan money and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, but still she has kept her smile.

Upon entering the nursing program, Deb formed a very close bond with one of her classmates. They became good friends and study partners, helping each other with everything, and each benefited greatly from the friendship. Late in the program, Deb's friend had to drop out for health reasons, and this took a toll on Deb. She did not feel as though she had connected with any of the other students, and now her support was gone. She became very emotional, and her grades began to slip. However, she quickly realized that this was her one shot at doing what she wanted to do with her life. She began to focus on the positive and kept in mind how much better things would be for her upon completion of this program. Again, a smile returned to her face.

Then, in January 2013, Deb's furnace broke. Because she is on a weatherization program, she had to go through specific channels for the repair. She came to Project HOPE, a Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance, for help with the costs as she just did not have the money to spare for the repair. Deb never once complained. She insisted that she was warm enough with her few space heaters and blankets, despite the fact that it had been brutally cold. By the time her furnace was repaired, she had gone nearly two weeks without heat. Still, she maintained a very positive attitude.

Deb Maust refuses to waste time and energy worrying about things she cannot change. She has persevered through many hardships, but she remains focused and, above all, happy. Her courage and positive attitude are nothing short of inspirational, and it was a pleasure to have her in Project HOPE.